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INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
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RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 5652
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3370
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 3234
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 3895
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC
RHMCSUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3885

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 001152

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [EPET](#) [ECON](#) [AJ](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: AZERBAIJAN STRIVING TO IMPROVE
RELATIONSHIP

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Sylvia Reed Curran. Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: According to an Azerbaijan embassy official, the relationship between the presidents of Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan is warming, but the Turkmen government is still cautious about embarking on joint projects. In addition, the Turkmen government continues to limit the activities of foreigners in the country, even when those foreigners are Azeris who have close linguistic and cultural ties to the Turkmen and have lived in the country for decades. The Government of Azerbaijan continues to press for more cooperation, but is concerned about Russian moves to disrupt any new ties. Given Turkmenistan's traditional reluctance to develop close partnerships with any particular country, Azerbaijan's efforts will be unlikely to produce any change in the near future. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) On September 9, Azad Pashayev, first secretary at the Embassy of Azerbaijan, told Poloff that Azerbaijan's government-to-government relations with Turkmenistan are improving, as evidenced by the May trip of President Berdimuhamedov to Baku, a phone call between the two countries' presidents on 4 September, and an invitation from Berdimuhamedov to Azerbaijan President Aliyev to come to Turkmenistan in mid-September for the Silk Road Rally. However, not all is smooth between the two countries, particularly when it comes to negotiating how to divide the oil in the disputed territory between the two countries in the Caspian Sea. Turkmenistan has threatened to take Azerbaijan to the International Arbitration Court, but Azerbaijan hopes to negotiate a solution.

¶3. (C) Pashayev said Azerbaijan is most concerned with peace and stability in the region, and in that spirit proposed joint projects to Berdimuhamedov when he was in Baku. The projects included building railway lines in Georgia, developing ports in Turkey, and building a factory in the Baltics that would produce finished products from raw materials. The Turkmen answer was, as usual, "we'll think about it."

14. (C) The Turkmen distance and reserve with foreigners extends to Azeris, despite the closeness of their languages and cultures, according to Pashayev. Ethnic Azeris living in Turkmenistan can work in almost any private sector job and can attend school, but they cannot work for the government. When the Embassy of Azerbaijan was exploring the possibility of starting an Azeri cultural organization, they were told to stop work on the idea. Azeri doctors and construction workers came to Turkmenistan to help in the aftermath of the 1948 earthquake and many stayed, but like other non-Turkmen groups, Azeris have left the country in large numbers since the end of the Soviet Union. Since 1991, about half the ethnic Azeri population has departed and now about 100,000 remain.

15. (C) Pashayev seemed to think the future looked bright for Azerbaijani-Turkmen relations. He did not appear worried about the media reports of Turkmenistan building a naval base on the Caspian Sea or the creation of a Turkmen merchant marine fleet. But he did say that an unnamed third country could, and probably would, complicate relations between the two countries.

16. (C) COMMENT: Media reports from international and Azeri sources have speculated about potential discord between Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan, but Pashayev did not indicate that there were any serious problems in the relationship. His comment about an unnamed third party was most likely aimed at Russia, and is in line with another comment he made about Azerbaijan not agreeing to a Russian proposal for a joint Caspian fleet because it did not want to cede control

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to Russia. Regardless of whether Russia is working against better Azerbaijani-Turkmen relations, it might be the persistent Turkmen reluctance to work closely with any foreign government that will keep relations limited. END
COMMENT
CURRAN